DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 204 080 RC 012 796

AUTHOR Helge, Doris
TITLE A Report Regarding Interagency Collaboration to Facilitate Services for Rural Handicapped Students.
INSTITUTION Murray State Univ., Ky. Center for Innovation and Development.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Special Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE Apr 81
GRANT G007801686
NOTE 32p.: Paper copy not available due to author's preference.

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization; Administrator Attitudes; *Agency Cooperation; Cooperative Planning; *Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; Educational Cooperation; Educational Resources; Educational Responsibility; Elementary Secondary Education; Institutional Role; Organizational Communication; Program Administration; Regional Cooperation; Rural Areas; *Rural Education; Rural Schools; *Special Education
IDENTIFIERS *Public Law 94 142; *Vocational Rehabilitation Act 1973

ABSTRACT

Education service requirements mandated by Public Law 94-142 and Section 504 of the 1973 Vocational Rehabilitation Act emphasize the need for interorganizational relationships in rural schools. A survey of 43 special education cooperatives and 32 districts in 17 states indicates that by the 1979-80 academic year 97% had developed interagency agreements to facilitate a free, appropriate public education for rural handicapped students. While regionalized rural service delivery allows a greater range of special services to be provided at greater cost effectiveness by fewer personnel, regionalized special education often results in arguments over locus of decision-making control, the location of the unit, personnel choices, loss of community pride and ownership in programs, and higher transportation costs. Data on interagency collaboration gathered during 1980-81 by a telephone survey of representatives of 100 federal agencies, national professional organizations and federally funded handicapped regional projects reveal that role clarification is essential among all involved agencies, "turf" issues must be resolved at national levels, internal agency plans as well as a systematic national plan and central leadership are needed, and resource constraints and lack of communication between local and federal agencies are concerns. (NEC)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

# A REPORT REGARDING INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION TO FACILITATE SERVICES FOR RURAL HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

ED204080

MAY 1981
ERIC/CRESS
RECEIVED

RC 012796

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Doris Helge

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

CONDUCTED BY THE NATIONAL RURAL RESEARCH AND PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROJECT
FUNDED BY THE U.S. OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

# A REPORT REGARDING INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION TO FACILITATE SERVICES FOR RURAL HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

Conducted by:

National Rural Research & Personnel Preparation Project (NRP)
Grant No.: G007801686
Center for Innovation & Development
Murray State University
Murray, Kentucky

Prepared for:

Office of Special Education
United States Department of Education
Washington, D.C.

By:

Doris Helge, Ph.D.
Project Director
April 1981

Data Collection & Analysis Team:
Sandy Watkins, M.S., Primary Data Analyst
Glenn Andis, Ph.D.
Laurie Baliew, M.S.
Jean Anne Hudder, M.S.
Pam Lammonds-Harwood, M.A.
Judith Maupin, B.A.
Susan McPherson, M.S.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES . . . . . iii

SECTION PAGE

1. National Initiatives for Interagency Collaboration . . . 1

2. The "State of the Art" of Interagency Collaboration in Rural Schools . . . . . 4

3. Perspectives of National Leadership Personnel Regarding the "State of the Art" of Interagency Collaboration at the National Level . . . . . 10

4. Placing the Cart After the Horse . . . . . 22

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 26

## LIST OF TABLES


| TABLE | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Types of Interagency Involvement Before and After Implementation of PL 94-142 | 8 |
| 2. | Types of Personnel Interviewed in the Interagency Collaboration Study | 11 |
| 3. | What Needs Must be Met for Your Organization to Effectively Collaborate with Other Agencies? | 13 |
| 4. | What Antecedents are Necessary to Initiate True Interagency Collaboration? | 14 |
| 5. | What Should Your Agency's Role Be in Facilitating Interagency Collaboration? | 16 |
| 6. | Describe Problems in Initiating Interagency Collaboration | 18 |
| 7. | Describe Resources or Facilitating Factors in Initiating Interagency Collaboration. | 19 |
| 8. | If a Group of Federal Agencies and Professionals Convened to Collaborate to Enhance Rural Special Education Services, What Outcomes Would You Expect? | 21 |

A REPORT REGARDING INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION TO FACILITATE SERVICES FOR RURAL HANDICAPPED STUDENTS

## National Initiatives for Interagency Collaboration

A variety of public and private agencies must be involved in providing services to handicapped children and their families. Yet, a 1974 Rand Corporation report concluded that the present service delivery system was fraught with inordinate complexity. A GAO investigation report detailed gross inefficiency and shuffling of handicapped persons from agency to agency with many persons not receiving needed services or receiving services only after exasperating difficulties. A 1978 study of the Office of the Comptroller General of the United States found (1) duplication of services and competition between agencies, (2) wasted resources, (3) barriers obstructing service access, and (4) inadequate services (Rosenau, 1980).

The Second Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of PL 94-142 (1981) of the U.S. Office of Special Education (OSE) determined another major problem to be ascertaining which program will provide or pay for a given service and under what conditions. For example, many state statutes prohibit an agency from using state funds to pay for services if another public or private agency could cover such services. On the premise that under PL 94-142, a state education agency was making certain services "generally available," non-educational agencies in such states either withdrew or diminished services.

United State Senate and House Subcommittee oversight hearings on PL 94-142 have provided a major sounding board for representatives of consumer and advocacy groups and service agencies. One of the ten most frequently cited topics in the hearings was interagency collaboration. (From Liaison Bulletin, (Supplement), Nov. 17, 1979, published by NASDE, Inc., Washington, DC.)

The Interagency Collaboration Primer of the Regional Resource Center Task Force on Interagency Collaboration (1979) related that federal and state offices reorganized after the above inquiries and reports in an effort to improve service delivery coordination. After follow-up studies indicated little improvement as a result of reorganization efforts, a federal interagency initiative was launched. This initiative included key agreements between major agencies providing services to handicapped children and youth with specific roles and responsibilities of agencies clarified. The agreements were to serve as prototypes for subsequent agreements at the state and local levels that more clearly specified programmatic and monetary responsibilities for different agencies providing services.

OSE's Second Annual Report to Congress (1981) detailed interagency coordination as a major administrative function of the agency. OSE has also made efforts to encourage innovative practices leading to collaboration in delivering services.

For example, the OSE and other federal agencies have jointly developed policy statements explaining how certain programs may legally continue to provide services and how the various agencies may appropriately collaborate. Every recent major piece of legislation dealing with the handicapped has contained some provisions for the integration

or coordination of services across major agencies. The formation of the Department of Education and the activities of the Task Force on Equal Educational Opportunity for Handicapped Children created in 1980 substantially increased coordination of enforcement of PL 94-142 and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

## The "State of the Art" of Interagency Collaboration in Rural Schools

Increasingly scarce resources and additional education service requirements mandated by Public Law 94-142 (PL 94-142) and Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act have emphasized the need for interorganizational relationships in rural schools. The current conservative era and anticipated federal cutbacks may make interagency collaboration at the local level even more imperative. Across the nation, state level tax reduction initiatives and groups of constituents and legislators are demanding evidence of non-duplication before approving new and continuing appropriations for services. Consumers are demanding more of service delivery systems and are using litigative and legislative vehicles more frequently.

One irony of current mandates for interagency collaboration to avoid duplication is that repetition of services has seldom been a problem in rural areas. Rather, rural schools have generally chosen to share information, funds, clients, staff, programs, facilities, and equipment in attempts to address severe gaps in service delivery systems. Some small districts have formed collaborative organizational structures solely because of the provision of PL 94-142 specifying that a district must apply for a minimum of $7,500 for their service delivery systems. However, the major reasons for rural interagency cooperation have clearly focused on scarcity of needed resources vis-á-vis bureaucratic complexity.

Congressional mandates for equity for handicapped populations including the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), PL 94-142, and Section 504 are clearly not being met in rural areas. Twenty percent of all rural populations live in poverty. The percentage of

rural school-age children not enolled in any school represents a non-enrollment rate of nearly twice that of urban areas. It has been indicated that the extent of handicapping conditions is proportionately larger in rural than in urban areas and that rural schools have the largest unserved special needs population (OSE Rural Special Education Task Force Report, 1979; National Institute of Education, 1975; Helge, 1980).

Problems of organizing to deliver rural special education services relate to the basic generic difficulty of rural districts--how to provide economical, specialized programs in small school units. The cost per unit of specialized services is higher in rural areas than in urban areas due to less professional resources available, transportation barriers, and other rural attributes.

Although rural communities devote more of their resources to education than their urban counterparts, the Coleman Report (1966) indicated rural educational achievement was significantly lower than urban. A National School Board Association survey, assessing costs of educating handicapped children according to the mandates of PL 94-142 found that small school districts had experienced the sharpest increases in special education costs of all U.S. districts (Education of the Handicapped, June 20, 1979).

Educational collaboratives have been viewed as a means by which rural schools and districts can share specialized human, material, and technical resources without consolidating. It has generally been possible for collaboratives to maintain a service orientation rather than overemphasizing regulatory functions. According to Mack & Stephens (1979), special district educational service agencies such as

state-mandated BOCES or Pennsylvania IEUs have made significant contributions of programs and services to public local education agencies (LEAs).

Special education has been a predominant concern of and reason for burgeoning cooperatives. PL 94-142 regulations specify that any LEA unable to qualify for a $7,500 allocation (based on the number of handicapped children served) will receive no pass-through funds. This mandate has stimulated the development of various types of consortia to provide special services. A 1979 National Institute of Education (NIE)-funded study of education service agencies discerned that: (1) special education was a universal priority of all agencies surveyed, and (2) over one-third of all expenditures of all the systems related to special education. In fact, special education staff constituted nearly one half the total staff of all agencies (Mack & Stephens, 1979).

While regionalized service delivery has allowed a greater range of special education and related services to be provided with fewer personnel than would be the case when offered by individual districts, collaboratives have definitely not offered panaceas. Regionalized special education has often resulted in arguments over the locus of decision-making control, the location of the unit, personnel choices, loss of community pride and ownership in programs, and higher transportation costs (Education of the Handicapped, June 20, 1979).

Centralized services have frequently amplified bussing problems. Savings accrued from serving larger numbers of students have sometimes been negated by greater costs of transportation, more drivers and fuel, and faster bus depreciation (Schrag, 1979).

The National Comparative Study Regarding Rural Special Education Delivery Systems Before and After Passage of PL 94-142 conducted by the OSE-funded National Rural Research and Personnel Preparation Project (NRP) addressed several strengths and concerns regarding the functioning of rural special education cooperatives and interagency agreements (Helge, 1980). Forty-three special education cooperatives and 32 districts in 17 states were involved in the study.

Almost all (97%) of the LEAs/cooperatives sampled had developed interagency agreements to facilitate a free, appropriate public education for rural handicapped students. These agreements were with agencies that varied from mental health, public health, and law enforcement agencies to universities and private foundations. Previously unavailable services such as physical and occupational therapy had been made available in many rural districts/cooperatives at no cost to families via such interagency agreements.

Interagency agreements made by cooperatives had increased from 7% of the cooperatives having such agreements before PL 94-142 to almost one-third (29%) by the 1979-80 academic year. Many cooperatives received services from neighboring local districts as well as from social service and private placement agencies.

Table 1 below, illustrates the types of interagency involvement before and after passage of PL 94-142. Such agreements were identified as essential in providing related and support services in sparsely populated areas with scarce professional resources. This was especially true in providing for students with low incidence handicaps. Increased interagency agreements were reported to be partially responsible for the average increase of 92% (between 1975 and 1980) in the number of students identified and served.

TABLE 1

Types of Interagency Involvement Before and After Implementation of PL 94-142

| | Before PL 94-142 | After PL 94-142 | Percent Change |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mental Health & Comprehensive Care Agencies | 25% | 48% | +92%* |
| Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies | 07% | 17% | +143%* |
| Residential Placement Agencies | 09% | 11% | +22% |
| Social Service Agencies | 21% | 25% | +19% |
| Law Enforcement Agencies | 07% | 09% | +29% |
| Public Health and Professional Medical Agencies | 19% | 13% | -32% |
| Family & Child Service Agencies | 08% | 13% | +63% |
| Cooperatives | 07% | 29% | +314% |
| Head Start Agencies | 03% | 04% | 33% |
| Universities | 0% | 05% | ** |
| Private Foundations | 0% | 05% | ** |
| Other: Easter Seal, CETA, Sheltered Workshops | 01% | 11% | +1000%* |
| No Interagency Agreements | 31% | 03% | -90%* |

* Significant to the .05 level
** Increase infinite; statistic cannot be calculated

Although these data exhibit positive trends in the development of interagency agreements, several problems were indicated by the 1980 study. Interagency agreements possible in suburban and urban districts were found to be less feasible in remote areas far from certain types of agencies and programs. In addition, data from the National Comparative Study strongly indicated that a full range of potential agreements had not been fully explored with entities such as preservice programs, law enforcement agencies, and private foundations. Many LEA/cooperative personnel expressed reservations about their grantwriting skills and concerns about requesting assistance from social agencies and university personnel.

The following additional concerns regarding inter-district collaboratives were identified in the study.

1. Goal displacement was a potential in that emphasis on cost efficiency sometimes became the overriding goal of an administrative structure, and individual child needs were placed at a lower priority level. A caveat seemed to be necessary in maintaining foci on the true purposes of the cooperative.

2. Adequate consideration had to be given to establishing effective relationships between the cooperative headquarters and each district in regular as well as special education matters. This included lines of accountability of all personnel hired by the cooperative to work with some or all districts involved. Problems frequently occurred when guidelines for dividing service time for cooperative personnel among various duties and districts were not clearly formulated. Some cooperatives found it effective to allocate district costs for the cooperative staff on the basis of the amount of time and service delivery in that particular district, and other districts preferred that staff be paid on an equally split basis, no matter where services were delivered.

3. Many cooperative personnel were concerned with the abilities of shared personnel to cover vast distances effectively, such as extremes of 24,000 square miles and entire islands. Many special education supervisory staff hired by the cooperatives were unable to effect special education staff work with their districts. They either had no hiring input or no control over staff actions, as many special education personnel were deemed to be accountable to the building principal once they entered his or her building.

4. Many staff hired by cooperatives were concerned that district personnel were abrogating their responsibilities toward the handicapped by allocating all responsibility for handicapped students to the cooperative. They felt the need for better education and commitment of district personnel in understanding their roles and complying with PL 94-142.

Many rural districts found regional service delivery threatening to the standard of local autonomy as regional decision-making frequently took place without the advice of LEA officials and parents. However, most rural districts preferred the cooperative level of removal of local autonomy versus control of the cooperative.

## Perspectives of National Leadership Personnel Regarding the "State of the Art" of Interagency Collaboration at the National Level

Additional data were gathered by the NRP during 1980-81 to determine perspectives of national leadership personnel regarding the potential for effective national interagency collaboration (IAC). This study included a comprehensive literature review and a telephone survey soliciting the opinions of representatives of 100 federal agencies, national professional organizations, and projects funded by the federal government to coordinate national or regional services for handicapped students using IAC as a major vehicle.

Respondents were primarily assistant secretaries of federal agencies related to rural education or their designees, Congressmen, executive directors of national professional organizations, and directors of projects funded by the OSE or NIE to enhance IAC efforts. The types of personnel interviewed are depicted in Table 2 below.

Questions on the survey instrument dealt with perceptions of needs for IAC, antecedents necessary for effective IAC, and potential roles of those surveyed to facilitate IAC. A force field approach was also initiated to delineate problems and resources in initiating IAC. In addition, the questionnaire assessed expectations of collaborative efforts among federal agencies and national professional organizations to improve rural special education services. The study incorporated the definition of IAC as "consisting of cooperative efforts between two or more organizations for the purpose of assessing needs or planning, implementing, or evaluating services for handicapped students."

Each questionnaire item queried participants regarding their national responsibilities and their perspectives with regard to regional or local IAC implementation. Respondents were encouraged to give as many responses as reflected their views on a given question. Responses were sorted, catalogued, and tabulated. All percentages quoted reflect the percentage of the total population of 100 respondents stating a particular area of opinion.

TABLE 2

Types of Personnel Interviewed in the Interagency Collaboration Study

| Type | Number |
|---|---|
| National Professional Organizations | 17 |
| Regional Resource Centers | 12 |
| Federal Regulatory Agencies | 11 |
| National OSE-Funded Projects Regarding IAC Enhancement | 11 |
| National Rural Organizations | 10 |
| Regional Education Laboratories (NIE-funded) | 9 |
| University Rural Centers and Projects | 8 |
| Statewide "Rural" Centers | 7 |
| Congressmen & Officer of Congressional Rural Caucus | 6 |
| Private Corporations | 5 |
| National Centers for Migrants | 4 |
| Total | 100 |

Results of the study clearly indicated that effective IAC at the national level was viewed not only as feasible but as essential for facilitating full service delivery for handicapped students.

As indicated in Table 3 below, participants felt strong needs for role clarification among all involved agencies so that the organization they represented could most effectively engage in IAC efforts. Respondents also felt a need for a systematic internal plan to be

coordinated with other agencies relating to their organizations. Although these two needs were seen as more critical for participant agencies to collaborate with other national level organizations (45% and 31% respectively), they were also viewed as important (33% and 24%) to facilitate collaboration of participant agencies with regional/local agencies.

Items not specified as internally problematic were at least as significant as those mentioned. Particularly in view of an era of decreasing budgets for most organizations, it was gratifying to note that increased monetary resources were not frequently mentioned as essential for cooperative efforts with other agencies to be initiated or enhanced. Neither were potentially arduous or impossible changes deemed essential such as reconstitutions of political or organizational structures. Instead, statements indicated strong motivations for IAC.

The next major items reported by the target population were antecedents necessary for initiating IAC at the national or regional/local levels. Contrary to results of many surveys of federal agency and national professional organization personnel regarding initiation of new emphases, few respondents felt formal legislation or mandates were necessary. There was an overriding perspective that insurmountable political constraints were not present, although clear government leadership was not evident. Almost double (58%:32%) the number of respondents felt that "turf" issues must be resolved at national levels than at regional/local levels before IAC would be successful. Comments included problems caused by organizational jealousies, competition for scarce resources and spheres of expertise, and arguments over responsibilities of service delivery.

TABLE 3

What Needs Must be Met for Your Organization to Effectively Collaborate with Other Agencies?*

| At the National Level? | | At the Regional or Local Level? | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Clarify each agency's role for working with others | 45% | Clarify each agency's role for working with others | 33% |
| Develop implementation plan for coordinating IAC efforts | 31% | Develop implementation plan for coordinating IAC efforts | 24% |
| Increase monetary resources | 15% | Understand significance of IAC | 10% |
| Increase knowledge of effective service delivery programs | 13% | No needs | 05% |
| Pass legislative mandates | 06% | IAC will never work | 03% |
| No needs | 08% | Pass legislative mandates | 01% |
| IAC will never work | 05% | Maintain autonomy | 01% |
| | | Increase knowledge of effectiveness of other programs | 01% |

* Percentages reflect the total percentage of respondents (N = 100) stating a specific opinion.

Anecdotes emphasized concerns that such ambiguity at the national level caused inconsistencies and service delivery lags at the regional/ local levels. In fact, role clarification was felt necessary by almost one-third (30%) of participants for effective national IAC and one-fifth (20%) of all participants for successful IAC at regional/ local levels. Yet a systematic plan was viewed as more crucial for regional/local level IAC (27%) than national IAC (20%). Almost one-third (28%) of the respondents expressed a feeling that a central leader with appropriate political support would best facili-

tate national IAC. Only 8% of all respondents felt this was necessary at the regional/local level.

Table 4 below illustrates the comparisons of perspectives regarding antecedents necessary for successful national and regional/local level IAC.

TABLE 4

What Antecedents are Necessary to Initiate True Interagency Collaboration?*

| At the National Level? | | At the Regional or Local Level? | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Overcome "turf" problems | 58% | Overcome "turf" problems | 32% |
| Clarify roles for working with other agencies | 30% | Develop IAC implementation plan | 27% |
| Identify/elect leader with political support | 28% | Clarify roles for working with other agencies | 20% |
| Develop IAC implementation plan | 20% | Educate public | 07% |
| Pass legislative mandates | 15% | Reduce role of federal government | 06% |
| Create federal understanding of local problems & needs | 13% | Increase monetary resources | 03% |
| Increase monetary resources | 09% | Identify/elect leader with political backing | 08% |
| Reduce role of federal government | 07% | Create federal understanding of local problems & needs | 03% |
| | | Pass legislative mandates | 02% |
| | | Change entire social structure of U.S. | 01% |

* Percentages reflect the total percentage of respondents (N = 100) stating a specific opinion.

When queried concerning potential roles of their organizations in facilitating IAC, respondents indicated a variety of options. Participants in the survey were enthusiastic about cooperating with each other, increasing their awareness of existing information bases among various agencies, and enhancing interagency communication.

A preponderance of respondents (58%) believed their roles at the national level were primarily to serve as networks--linking identified needs with available resources and increasing awareness of options. Secondary roles participants described for the agencies they represented were to provide technical assistance and introduce legislation regarding IAC.

Respondents described a more direct service orientation when identifying their potential roles at regional/local levels. Almost one-fourth (23%) of the survey participants believed their agencies should stimulate regional and local networks and technical assistance. Almost one-fifth (19%) felt that their agencies should initiate communication among regional/ local service delivery agencies. As indicated in Table 5 below, very little emphasis was placed on serving as IAC models (congruent with later comments that such models were needed); and no participants mentioned a predilection towards regulatory roles or creation of formal organizational structures.

Respondents were next asked to describe problems in initiating IAC at the national level and at regional or local levels. Problems of "turf" or responsibility and delineated spheres of expertise were felt to predominate at the national (44%) and regional/local (50%) levels. These findings were consistent with earlier participant feelings that turf issues would have to be resolved before true IAC could

be initiated at both levels. This overall perspective also lends even more credence to the OSE contention in the Second Annual Report to Congress (1981) that a major problem in service delivery is related to difficulties in determining lines of responsibility.

TABLE 5

What Should Your Agency's Role Be in Facilitating Interagency Collaboration?*

| At the National Level? | | At the Regional or Local Level? | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Serve as networking agency | 58% | Serve as networking agency | 23% |
| Introduce legislation re: IAC | 15% | Provide technical assistance | 18% |
| Provide technical assistance to other agencies | 14% | Initiate communication among local service delivery agencies | 19% |
| Don't know | 05% | | |
| Have no role at national level | 03% | Provide written documentation of IAC | 02% |
| Serve as model of IAC | 07% | Serve as IAC model | 01% |
| Reduce expenditures | 01% | Nothing | 02% |

* Percentages reflect the total percentage of respondents (N = 100) stating a specific opinion.

Resource constraints (including money) were the second highest problem designated by interviewees at the national and regional/local levels (22% and 33% respectively). Lack of communication between local and federal agencies was designated as a significant concern at regional/local levels (22%).

Although not mentioned as frequently (15% and 13% respectively), a concern described regarding national or regional/local levels was the specific person initiating the IAC emphasis. Related factors mentioned were political constraints (14% and 10% respectively) and lack of internal support in various national agencies (11%). Other comments indicated a desire for "best practices" models.

It was significant that initiation of IAC was not viewed as a heavy, paperwork-oriented responsibility or as extremely time consuming. There was surprisingly little mention of problems convening agency representatives because of the number of agencies involved or due to geographic barriers. Table 6 below illustrates this positive view of IAC as a concept even when acknowledging problems in initiating cooperative efforts between agencies. Less than 5% of all respondents related that IAC was viewed negatively, or was ineffective or impossible. Although problems in initiating IAC were reported, the vast majority of participants stated that many national, regional, and local resources for collaboration existed. Table 7 below identifies these resources.

The ability to pool existing resources for a common cause was seen as the best resource currently available at national, regional and local levels (34% and 25% respectively). The present state of the economy was also viewed as facilitative of collaborative efforts at all levels. The national trend toward removing legal constraints and explicitly tying some types of federal and state funds to mandated IAC procedures was mentioned by 19% of the respondents as facilitative. Existent vehicles for networking such as data banks and newsletters were listed as resources by 17% of all respondents.

TABLE 6

Describe Problems in Initiating Interagency Collaboration*

| At the National Level | | At the Regional or Local Level | |
|---|---|---|---|
| "Turfdom" | 44% | "Turfdom" | 50% |
| Budgetary constraints | 22% | Lack of resources to implement IAC at local levels | 33% |
| Specific individual initiating IAC | 15% | Lack of communication between local & federal agencies | 22% |
| Political constraints | 14% | Specific individual initiating IAC | 13% |
| Lack of internal support in each agency | 11% | Political constraints | 10% |
| Time consumption | 08% | Lack of internal communication in agencies | 13% |
| Lack of communication among agencies | 07% | Impossible task | 04% |
| Lack of communication from federal & other levels | 07% | No problems | 03% |
| Inadequate definition of agency responsibilities for IAC | 07% | Difficulty convening agencies | 02% |
| Difficulties convening agencies | 03% | | |
| Needs not met by IAC | 03% | | |
| IAC is a negative term | 02% | | |
| Paperwork | 01% | | |

* Percentages reflect the total percentage of respondents (N = 100) stating a specific opinion.

Only 19% of all participants felt that models of best practices were available for the national level, and only 11% of the interviewees felt they were available for the regional and local levels. Less than 2% of all respondents felt a lack of any IAC resources at any level.

TABLE 7

Describe Resources or Facilitating Factors in Initiating Interagency Collaboration*

| At the National Level | | At the Regional or Local Level | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pooling resources to work toward a common cause | 34% | Pooling resources to work toward a common cause | 25% |
| Legal supports | 19% | Local awareness of community resources available | 15% |
| State of the national economy | 18% | Models of best practices available | 11% |
| Existent vehicles for networking | 17% | State of the national economy | 09% |
| Individual interest in IAC | 15% | Leadership in IAC | 13% |
| Models of Best Practices | 09% | Local government leadership | 05% |
| Grassroots involvement | 03% | No resources | 02% |
| Common sense | 01% | | |
| Cannot identify resources | 01% | | |

* Percentages reflect the total percentage of respondents (N = 100) stating a specific opinion.

The last question asked of those surveyed was rather hypothetical in nature. Participants were asked what outcomes for enhancement of rural special education services would they expect at national, regional, and local levels if they met with the other 99 interviewees as representatives of federal and national organizations. There were

many similarities in their responses regarding the national, regional, and local levels. The most frequently expected outcomes were to establish communication linkages (27% at the national level and 15% at the regional/local levels). Understandably, expected outcomes at the regional/local levels were more focused on improved service delivery (39%), although this was also a focus at the national level (25%). In both instances, comments indicated that improvements were expected to eliminate duplication of responsibilities, enhance service delivery, and improve personnel preparation.

One-fifth (20%) of those surveyed felt that formal working agreements regarding IAC would be established, and one-fifth (20%) felt that collaboration would create an improved national focus on rural issues.

Consistent with information reported earlier that changes in organizational and legislated structures were not priorities of this prestigious group, only 9% expected changes in administrative structures to be outcomes of a national IAC meeting. A number of participants (13%) were doubtful of potential outcomes given the current political climate. (The study was conducted immediately after the 1980 U.S. presidential election. Many persons interviewed expected significant changes in their agencies as the new administration was installed in the executive branch.)

Table 8 below outlines expected outcomes of those interviewed were they to engage in collaborative efforts with the agencies of other respondents.

TABLE 8

If a Group of Federal Agencies and Professionals Convened to Collaborate to Enhance Rural Special Education Services, What Outcomes Would You Expect?*

| At the National Level | | At the Regional or Local Level | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Establish communication linkages | 27% | Improve service delivery at local level | 39% |
| Improve changes in service delivery | 25% | Establish communication linkages | 15% |
| Establish formal working agreement for IAC | 20% | Implement funding changes to impact local districts agencies | 15% |
| Improved national focus on rural issues | 20% | Create awareness of local rural issues | 10% |
| No outcomes expected in current political climate | 10% | Disseminate best practices | 04% |
| Legislative changes | 10% | No outcomes expected in current political climate | 02% |
| Changes in administrative structure | 09% | | |
| Increase cost effectiveness of services | 06% | | |
| Attitude changes | 04% | | |

* Percentages reflect the total percentage of respondents (N = 100) stating a specific opinion.

In summary, IAC was viewed positively and as increasingly essential. Resources for effective collaboration at all levels were identified. Yet survey participants identified significant problems such as turf protection and interagency role clarification that will be difficult to overcome. Participants felt the need for internal agency plans as well as a systematic national plan and central leadership at the national level. A significant number of respondents felt a need for effective "best practice models" for IAC.

## Placing the Cart After the Horse

Many earlier IAC efforts were based on common sense, and IAC was viewed as a natural method of achieving common goals. With today's political mood including legislatures demanding evidence of the effectiveness of expenditures and handicapped students, parents, and advocacy groups demanding quality services, there is a trend for federal and state funding to be explicitly tied to or heavily biased toward the formation or maintenance of collaborative arrangements among programs related to special education.

A paper offering perspectives on interorganizational relationships submitted by Lynn Baker to the NIE in 1980 summarized theories of interorganizational collaboration. Her summary concluded that although decision makers may view IAC arrangements as opportunities to increase their efficiency and ability to achieve organizational goals, much of the current literature on collaboration is based on unrealistic assumptions of rationalistic, goal-oriented organizations seeking to maximize their utilities through cooperation.

Baker elaborated on this reasoning by reporting that external mandates frequently resulted in organizational conflict over program emphases, particularly when organizational members felt driven into areas where they lacked resources or expertise (Baker, 1980). The implications of external PL 94-142 mandates and the typical lack of special education resources in rural LEAs are obvious. Molnar and Rogers (1979) had noted that structural inconsistencies in federal mandates tended to "exacerbate conflicts at the operational level" such as those regarding allocation of responsibilities.

The NRP studies reported above illustrated this problem. For example, needs for improved IAC identified in the 1980-81 study of federal agency personnel had ramifications discerned in the 1980 study at the rural local school level (e.g., incongruities between Title I and PL 94-142 regulations).

Perrow (1979) postulated that (1) conflict is more likely to occur in more complex, interdependent, and interactive relationships, and (2) conflict is inevitable because entities continuously negotiate to increase their own discretion and control over their own opinions. If these premises are true, educational collaboratives and other interagency relationships are certainly vulnerable.

As evidence of such conflict, the Technical Assistance Dissemination System (TADS) discovered via a national study of early childhood handicapped educators that while IAC was viewed as the greatest strength of these service providers, it was also noted to be one of the greatest stress producers (Black, et al., 1980).

As reported above, participants in the NRP survey of national federal agency and professional organization personnel noted a lack of validated models for IAC. Although this respondent population felt the need for such models, an NIE-funded Far West Laboratory study indicated that it is best not to endorse "best" or validated models when attempts are made to provide opportunities to share insights and enhance collaborative networking. As this is the express purpose of many IAC efforts, these findings are particulary relevant.

IAC models that have been published typically feature "consensus" as one of the first essential steps. Baker identified numerous sources in IAC literature indicating that consensuality in such

relationships is rare and that equality and mutuality are also atypical. The only reliable factors appear to be changing environments and inevitable conflicts.

McLaughlin and Christensen (1980) attempted to validate one nationally disseminated model of IAC. After site visits to exemplary programs to assess consistency of process steps with stages in the published IAC model, they reported that processes delineated as "common steps" could not be specified nor could their order be validated. Rather, action steps were inseparably intertwined, and each was completed several times. Persons interviewed during the study indicated, however, that all of the steps outlined to them were important and that the question of developmental steps should not be dismissed without reconsideration of barriers to development.

McLaughlin and Christensen (1980) further stated that many of the conditions they identified suggested that even though the steps may have been accomplished, they may not have been done so effectively. Although their study did not emerge with the expected importance of the order or the steps outlined by the RRC, McLaughlin and Christensen did observe some logical sequencing in the exemplary programs in which they conducted site visits. For example, the development of an information base on client needs and service availability naturally precede the design of a response plan. They concluded that careful consideration of the process set forth in the model (established by the 1979 Regional Resource Center Task Force on IAC) could lead to productive planning.

"Collaboration" clearly is not necessarily a direct route to efficiency and effectiveness, and foolproof best practices models of

IAC are not available. While the cart must be placed behind the horse, IAC is an essential vehicle at federal as well as regional and local levels. Ambiguities at the national level are directly linked with inconsistencies and service delivery lags at the regional and local levels. Additionally, there have been consistent findings between national and local studies of rural IAC problems, such as problems in clarifying accountability structures.

Many unanswered questions remain regarding effective governance, service delivery, and impact of IAC and the impact on service delivery of varying organizational structures. Yet, a realistic look at inter-organizational relationships including necessary and effective strategies of recognizing and negotiating with environmental change, conflict, control, and cooperation is essential so that we may be able to effectively coordinate services for special needs populations. This is imperative in rural areas traditionally characterized by scarce resources and currently faced with declining budgets.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Baker, L.E. Perspectives on interorganizational relationships. Unpublished paper written for National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C., 1980, 18 pages.

BEH lacks rural special education strategy, expert says. Education of the Handicapped, June 6, 1979, p. 5.

Black, T., Gilderman, D., Jackson, J., & Woodard, M. Serving young handicapped children in rural America. Proceedings of the HCEEP Workshop. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1980.

Costs are double to educate the handicapped. Education of the Handicapped, June 20, 1979, p. 3.

Helge, D.I. National comparative study regarding rural special education delivery systems before and after passage of PL 94-142. Murray, KY: Center for Innovation & Development, Murray State University, 1980.

Regional Resource Center Task Force on Interagency Collaboration. Interagency collaboration on full service for handicapped children and youth - A primer. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, August 1979.

Mack, D.P., & Stephens, E.R. Structural approaches to meeting educational needs. Paper presented at National Seminar on Rural Education, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, May 1979.

McLaughlin, J.A., & Chrisensen, M. A study of interagency collaborative agreements to discover training needs for special education administrators. Executive Summary, Year 1, Prepared for Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, Grant No. G00790093, 1980, 34 pages.

Molnar, J.J. & Rogers, D.L. A comparative model of interorganizational conflict. Administrative Science Quarterly, 1979, 24, (3), pp. 405-425.

National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDE) Liaison Bulletin, Washington, D.C., Nov. 17, 1979.

National Institute of Education. Rural futures development strategies. Portland, Oregon: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 1975.

Office of Special Education rural special education task force report. Internal Working Document. Washington, D.C.: Office of Special Education, 1980.

Perrow, C. TMI: A normal accident: Working papers. Stony Brook, N.Y.: State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1979.

Resources for educational program improvement. The Network, Andover, Maine. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Education, 1979, 177 pp.

Rosenau, F.S. Knots in the network of information sources about education, Educational Leadership, February 1980, pp. 426-432.

Schrag, J. et al. Education of handicapped children in rural areas: A paper prepared for the Rural Education Seminar. College Park, Md.: May, 1979, 49 pages.

U.S. Department of Education. 'To assure the free appropriate public education of all handicapped children. Second Annual Report to Congress on the implementation of Public Law 94-142: The Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Washington: U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 1981.